

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Alcohol, Tobacco and Drug Use

The Council worked through the entire sequence of interacting factors that contribute to each community health problem identified. Use and abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs are believed to be directly linked to poor health outcomes for many Decatur County residents.

The actual number of individuals who abuse alcohol and other drugs is unknown. Privacy issues and other barriers preclude a thorough review of the prevalence of the problem. The University of Tennessee estimates that 31 percent of Tennessee residents use alcohol regularly while 12 percent use alcohol with other drugs regularly. In a local survey conducted by the health council, 26 percent of respondents reported regular use of alcohol. The best available data indicates that at least 13 percent of residents use illegal drugs.

The community survey conducted by the health council indicated that 87 percent of respondents believed alcohol and drug abuse was a serious health problem in the community. Alcohol and drug abuse was cited as a serious health problem by a greater percentage of respondents than any other health issue. In a telephone survey conducted by the University of Tennessee, 74 percent of respondents characterized alcohol abuse as a “definite problem.”

Community Resources

ALCOHOL AND DRUG ABUSE

Schools
Decatur County Juvenile Court
Churches
Quinco Community Mental Health Center
Decatur County General Hospital
Physician Offices
Decatur County Health Department

Unhealthy Lifestyles

Members of the Council are concerned that many residents practice lifestyles that lead to poor health outcomes. Of particular concern is the general reluctance in the community to use seat belts and child safety restraints. According to information provided by the Department of Safety, Decatur County ranks 7th worst among Tennessee’s 95 counties in terms of the percentage of children properly restrained. It is estimated that 24.4 percent of children in Decatur County are not regularly restrained when transported.

In a Community Risk Factor Survey conducted by the Health Council, 34 percent of respondents described themselves as smokers. Statewide 27 percent of residents consider themselves smokers. Residents with a high school or technical education, or less, are much more likely to smoke. Individuals who are unemployed are also more likely to smoke.